

Dear C0-chairs Luxenberg and Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

Thank you for accepting this testimony **in favor of Raised SB 4**, and specifically **Section 21** of the proposed Bill. This testimony will provide data driven support for section 21, and also recommend a language change to fix a potential discrepancy.

Connecticut has one of the highest electricity rates in the nation. As the vast majority of residential electricity customers pay the same Rate R1, the impact of these exceptionally high electricity prices regressively and disproportionately impacts low to moderate income households. Connecticut's most at-risk households require assistance to avoid having to make choices between energy and heat or food, medication and other basic needs. Raised SB 4 is critical to improving this situation.

Based on 2018 data, Connecticut's statewide average energy burden (household energy expenditures like electric, gas, heating fuel divided by annual household income) is 3%, while most of our cities experience rates of 6% or higher and may reach 27%. Household energy burden that's higher than 6% is considered high and anything above 10% is considered severe. Low-income households, renters and homes with older appliances are more likely to experience higher energy burden. (<https://action-lab.org/energyburdenhtfd/files/2022/01/Energy-Burden-in-Hartford-CT.-A-report-for-Sierra-Club-and-the-Community-2021-.pdf>). Current price spikes - nearly 100% in some circumstances - have dramatically increased the number of at-risk households as a consequence of their energy burdens.

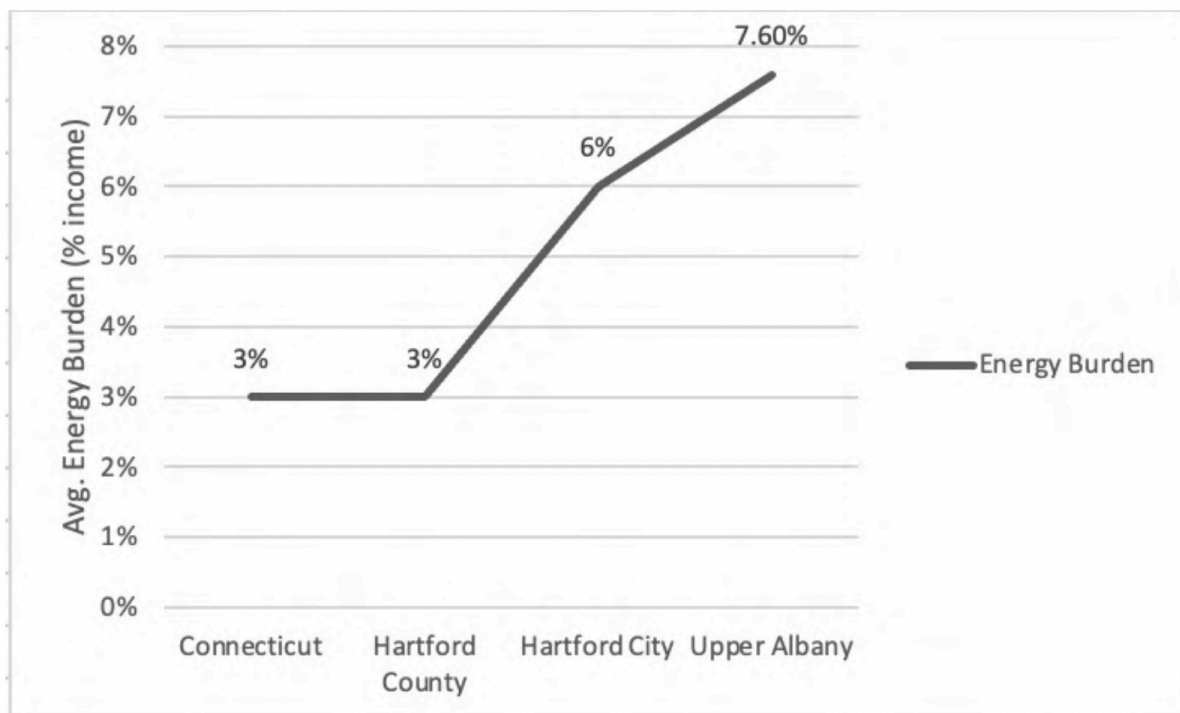


Figure 3. Average energy burden in selected regions

Section 21 will provide necessary funding to help address this inequality. Energy efficiency, on-site renewable energy, and health and safety remediation are critical to improving the living conditions of many Connecticut citizens.

Please note a requested clarification to Section 21 (b) and (c), which state (emphasis added):

(b) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in coordination with the Commissioner of Housing, shall establish a pilot program to provide grants for retrofitting projects for multifamily residences built before 1980 *and located in environmental justice communities* that (1) improve the energy efficiency of such residences, including, but not limited to, the installation of heat pumps, solar power generating systems, improved roofing, storm doors and windows and improved insulation, or (2) remediate health and safety concerns, such as mold, vermiculite, asbestos, lead and radon.

(c) On and after January 1, 2024, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall accept applications, in a form to be specified by the commissioner, *from any owner of a residential dwelling unit for a grant under the program.*

Subsection (b) suggests that only multifamily residences located in environmental justice communities qualify for the pilot funding. However, subsection (c) suggests that any owner could apply for a grant whether or not the building is located in an environmental justice community. I suggest that Section 21 grant funding should be available to all otherwise qualifying multifamily residences whether or not they are located in environmental justice communities. Low and moderate income household in, for example, Bristol, should not be excluded from the program simply because they are not located in an environmental justice community. Section 21 should be focused on serving families in need wherever they may be located in Connecticut.

Thank you,

Arthur Helmus
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